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SUBJECT: INTERVIEW WITH LUKASHENKO'S WIFE

Classified by Charge Constance Phlipot for Reasons 1.4 B &
[1D](#).

[11.](#) (U) Summary: An independent newspaper interviewed President Lukashenko's separated wife, Galina, on September [129](#). His wife spoke of how the two met and their short time living together as husband and wife. Galina claimed she and Lukashenko are still legally married and that it was her decision to stay in the village rather than live with her husband in Minsk. Galina spoke of her children and grandchildren and life as Belarus' first lady. The reporter who gave the interview attempted to gain personal information about Galina and Lukashenko's personal relationship and succeeded in some aspects. The reporter noted that throughout the interview, Lukashenko's wife spoke with an air of melancholy about her. End Summary.

The Story of How They Met

[12.](#) (SBU) The September 29 edition of the independent newspaper Komsamolskaya Pravda (KP), Belarus' second largest newspaper, featured an interview with President Lukashenko's wife, Galina Radionovna. Born in 1955 in the Bilayski region of Belarus, Galina moved with her sister and mother, Elana Fyodorovna, to the latter's birthplace in the Shklov region after Galina finished the seventh grade. [The article insinuates that Galina's father was not around.] Galina studied with Aleksandr Lukashenko, who she affectionately referred to as "Sasha," at the local school in Shklov.

Courtship and Marriage

[13.](#) (U) Galina bragged to KP how handsome Lukashenko was and how all the young schoolgirls had crushes on him. In her opinion, she was lucky to catch such a good man. Galina spoke of how Lukashenko would visit her at her house in Alexandria, which was four kilometers away, in rainy, snowy, or blizzard-like conditions.

[14.](#) (U) After high school graduation, Sasha enrolled at the Mogilev Institute as a history major. One year later, Galina enrolled at the same institute. In 1975, after finishing her third academic year and after Sasha received his diploma, the two married. According to Galina, her mother, who worked as a director of Belarusian language and

literature studies at the school in Shklov, was not pleased with the marriage since Galina still had one more year of college. Her mother, however, did not protest. Galina reminisced about their first years of marriage. They were not rich, as Galina pointed out, but did not mind spending their money on books and had a good house library. She commented on how much she and Sasha enjoyed reading.

Troubled Times

¶5. (U) Lukashenko joined the army when Galina finished the university and shortly thereafter they had their first son, Viktor (Vitya). Galina admitted that life became difficult after her son's birth. Sasha had a good job and she was trying to find work as a teacher in one of the local Mogilev schools. Their son Viktor, however, came down with an infectious disease and Galina reportedly spent one year nursing him back to health in a hospital. In the article, Galina described it as a horrible time and remembered how often she had to run to the pharmacy for medication. She noted that after awhile, she forgot all about a normal life and did not even notice when holidays came around.

¶6. (U) A doctor told the Lukashenkos that if they wanted to have a healthy son, they would have to move out of the city to a small village. Therefore, Sasha and Galina moved to Rizhkovichi. As Galina noted, Sasha quit thinking of his career and focused his time on "conditioning" and rehabilitating his son while Galina took a job at the local preschool. Eventually, Viktor regained his health.

Two Separate Lives

¶7. (U) Once she finished speaking, the KP journalist attempted to ask Galina personal questions about her marriage to the President. First, KP asked if she was legally (with the stress on "legally") married to President Lukashenko, to which her response was "of course." The couple did not marry in a church because, according to Galina, that was a time when a church wedding was not allowed or accepted. She admitted she would not have been against it, but today she does not know how her husband would look upon a church wedding.

¶8. (U) Galina told KP that it was her decision to stay in Rizhkovichi when her husband became President. However, she did mention that Sasha did not try to persuade her to move with him to Minsk. Galina would not tell the reporter why she decided to stay in the village. According to Galina, Sasha does not visit her much, but she is often in Minsk. When KP asked if she had ever been to the president's residence, she replied "of course", but she was not the "woman of the house" because she did not live there. Galina told KP that like any other husband, Lukashenko materially supports her. She told the reporter that she still loves her husband (though she laughed when asked) and is not offended that she does not live in the capital, claiming that she had chosen this life.

The Hassles of Being the First Lady

¶9. (U) Galina spoke of how at the beginning of her husband's tenure as president, people used to give her letters of request to pass on to him. She said it was mainly neighbors at first, complaining about unfair land divisions and other minor problems. Now, many non-locals and strangers send her letters hoping that she will pass them on to her husband. Galina apparently reads every letter and determines which ones are important enough to be sent to the president. Recently, a mother asked Galina to help her with her son who was apparently framed for a crime. Galina helped the woman and suggested that the authorities give the boy's case a second review.

¶10. (U) The first lady told KP that she decides the

domestic questions, like what will be for dinner or what shirt to buy while Sasha makes the serious household decisions. [Comment: This statement is odd since Lukashenko appears never to be in the same house with his wife.] She never inquires into his government affairs and it has always been that way. Galina admitted that she was a very yielding wife and would always be one.

The Lukashenko Family

¶11. (C) Galina's sons Viktor and Dima now live in Drozhdzi, the same residential neighborhood as their father. [Note: The Drozhdzi neighborhood is a complex of million-dollar homes where the president and his cronies all live. It was also the residential neighbor where foreign ambassadors lived until Lukashenko evicted them in 1997.] Viktor graduated from college with a degree in international affairs and, according to Galina, works as a presidential aide to his father. [Comment: It is rumored that Viktor is in charge of his father's security forces and/or acts as an advisor for the presidential administration. He was appointed to the deputy general director of the government owned telecommunications company BeST in early 2005 and has worked as the deputy head of the scientific production association AGAT. He is also rumored to be a member of the GOB's Commission on Military-Technical Cooperation and Export Control as well as a member of the State Industrial Committee (military exports), playing a role in arms sales to the Middle East and Asia.] Dima is a lawyer by trade and is now the chair of the Presidential Sport Club. Galina has three granddaughters, Viktoria, Anastasia and Daria, and one grandson, Aleksandr.

¶12. (U) According to the first lady, the president loves his grandchildren and "melts" whenever they are around. He spoils them more than he ever did his own boys. Galina visits her boys' homes on the holidays and "enjoys" how they live. She adores her daughter-in-laws and is happy that her sons help their wives around the house. Galina commented that while her husband was often "caught up in work", her sons learned to help her around the house. They can reportedly repair anything and know how to scythe and plow.

¶13. (U) Now that her children have grown and moved to Minsk, Galina is alone, but she does not mind. She reads a lot and takes long walks through the woods with her sheep dog Balu (named after a classic animated character) and feeds the many stray dogs that seem to hang around her house.

The Journalist's Impressions

¶14. (U) For many years, KP has tried to get an interview with Lukashenko's wife but had always been unsuccessful, until now. The reporter noted that Galina's house was the best in the village, but failed in comparison to the homes of the rich new-Belarusians, including that of her husband. Galina also mentioned in the interview that she works as the head regional specialist for health rehabilitation and sanatorium-resort recuperation, and because of the large workload, is always tired but has trouble sleeping at nights. The reporter commented that even though the interview went smooth, Galina's eyes looked very sad, even when she laughed.

Comment

¶15. (C) The KP expose gave a rare look into the mysterious relationship between Lukashenko and his wife. Largely kept out of the public spotlight, Galina admitted in her interview that people do not recognize her when she attends the theaters and events in Minsk. The article featured old pictures of her and a skinny, teenage Lukashenko with the beginnings of his infamous mustache. However, other than

photos of the young couple and of their wedding day, no other photos of the two appear in newspapers. It is widely known that Lukashenko has a mistress and an illegitimate child in Minsk. Allegedly, the woman in Lukashenko's life is the daughter of the Minister of Health and works as Lukashenko's "personal nurse," handling his medications.

¶116. (C) The goal of KP's interview with Galina, as indicated by the text and questions, was to show Lukashenko's odd (and even poor) relationship with his wife. On the online version at www.minsk.kp.ru/2005/09/29/doc84177/, the article is followed by comments from readers, many of whom lambasted the president for hiding his wife in a village while sharing a home with another woman. Others praised Galina for sticking to traditional values of marriage, even though her husband had done her wrong. It is surprising that Lukashenko allowed his wife to give the interview at all. Despite Galina's and possibly Lukashenko's intentions, the article subversively portrayed Lukashenko as a poor husband who has rarely been around for his wife.

PHLIPOT